

News Release



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SECRETARY KEMPTHORNE ANNOUNCES \$26 MILLION IN GRANTS TO CALIFORNIA AND NEVADA TO SUPPORT ENDANGERED SPECIES

Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne today announced more than \$26 million in grants to California and Nevada to support conservation planning and acquisition of vital habitat for threatened and endangered fish, wildlife and plants. The grants, awarded through the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, will benefit a plethora of species including the California red-legged frog, the San Joaquin kit fox, the Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard, and the desert tortoise.

“These grants are incredibly important tools to conserve threatened and endangered species,” said Secretary of Interior Dirk Kempthorne. “Our ability to successfully conserve habitat for imperiled species depends on long-term partnerships and voluntary landowner participation. These grants provide the means for States to work with landowners and communities to conserve habitat and foster conservation stewardship efforts for future generations.”

This year through the Cooperative Endangered Species Fund, California and Nevada received \$1.8 million through the Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants Program, \$21.6 million through the Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Grants Program and \$2.6 million through the Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program.

Authorized by Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act, the grants enable states to work with private landowners, conservation groups and other agencies to initiate conservation planning efforts and acquire and protect habitat to support the conservation of threatened and endangered species. The three programs were established to help reduce potential conflicts between the conservation of threatened and endangered species and land development and use.

Among the recipients of the Habitat Conservation Planning (HCP) Land Acquisition grants is the Western Riverside County Multi-species HCP, receiving \$12 million. This grant will permanently protect habitat for 18 federally listed species on 578 acres in Riverside County. By purchasing 450 acres of land in the San Jacinto River area, several core populations of federally listed plants, including spreading navarretia, San Jacinto Valley crowscale, thread-leaved brodiaea, and slender-horned spineflower will be conserved. In addition, the grant will conserve lands along the San Jacinto River, protecting one of three major populations of the federally endangered San Bernardino kangaroo rat. The funds will also be used to purchase 128 acres of land in the Santa Rosa Plateau area to protect one of the most ecologically significant complexes of vernal pools in southern California that supports populations

of the Riverside fairy shrimp. Other species that will benefit from acquisition of these lands include least Bell's vireo, the coastal California gnatcatcher, California Orcutt grass and Munz's onion.

In rapidly-developing Butte County, a HCP Planning Assistance Program grant was awarded to support the development of a regional HCP. This category of grant was created to help states and territories develop HCPs by supporting baseline surveys and inventories, document preparation, outreach, and similar planning activities. A \$500,990 grant was awarded to Butte County Association of Governments, the county, and its four incorporated communities to help develop a HCP in an area that is experiencing unprecedented growth. The HCP potentially will cover 333,000 acres with up to 11 different vegetation communities, that are home to 15 federally listed species including all known populations of the endangered Butte County meadowfoam, plus 15 other species at risk.

The Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program provides funds to states and territories to acquire habitat for endangered and threatened species with approved recovery plans. Habitat acquisition to secure long term protection is often an essential element of a comprehensive recovery effort for a listed species. One of this year's grants will provide \$727,434 for the acquisition of 66 acres of land in the Santa Rosa Mountains contributing to further recovery efforts for the peninsular bighorn sheep by eliminating development threats to the species. Lands proposed for acquisition are within currently occupied, core habitat that supports one of the largest concentrations of the species in California. These lands provide some key foraging and lambing areas, including areas that support alluvial fan vegetation communities, which provide unique nutritional benefits such as greater plant diversity with high protein content.

For a complete list of the 2006 grant awards for these programs (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 15.615), see the Service's Endangered Species Grants home page at <http://endangered.fws.gov/grants/section6/index.html>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 63 fishery resource offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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